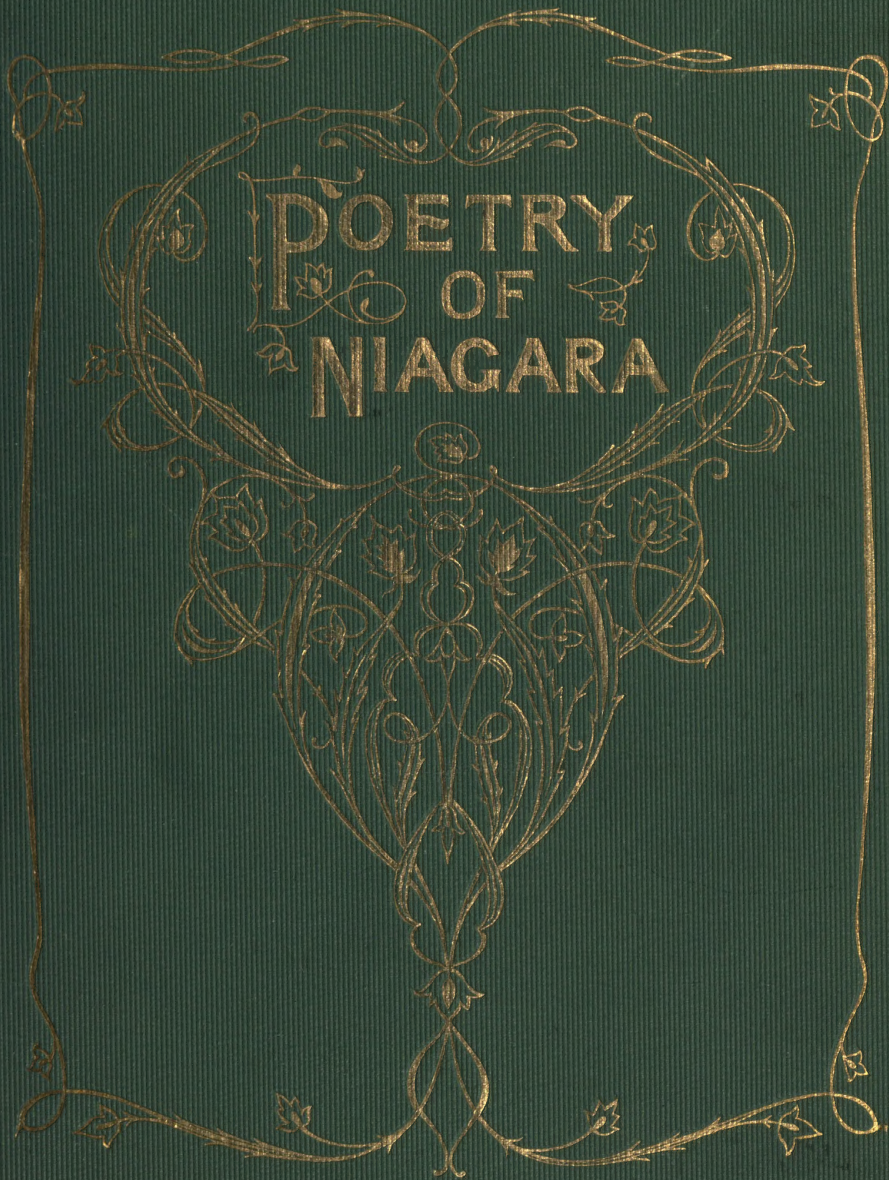
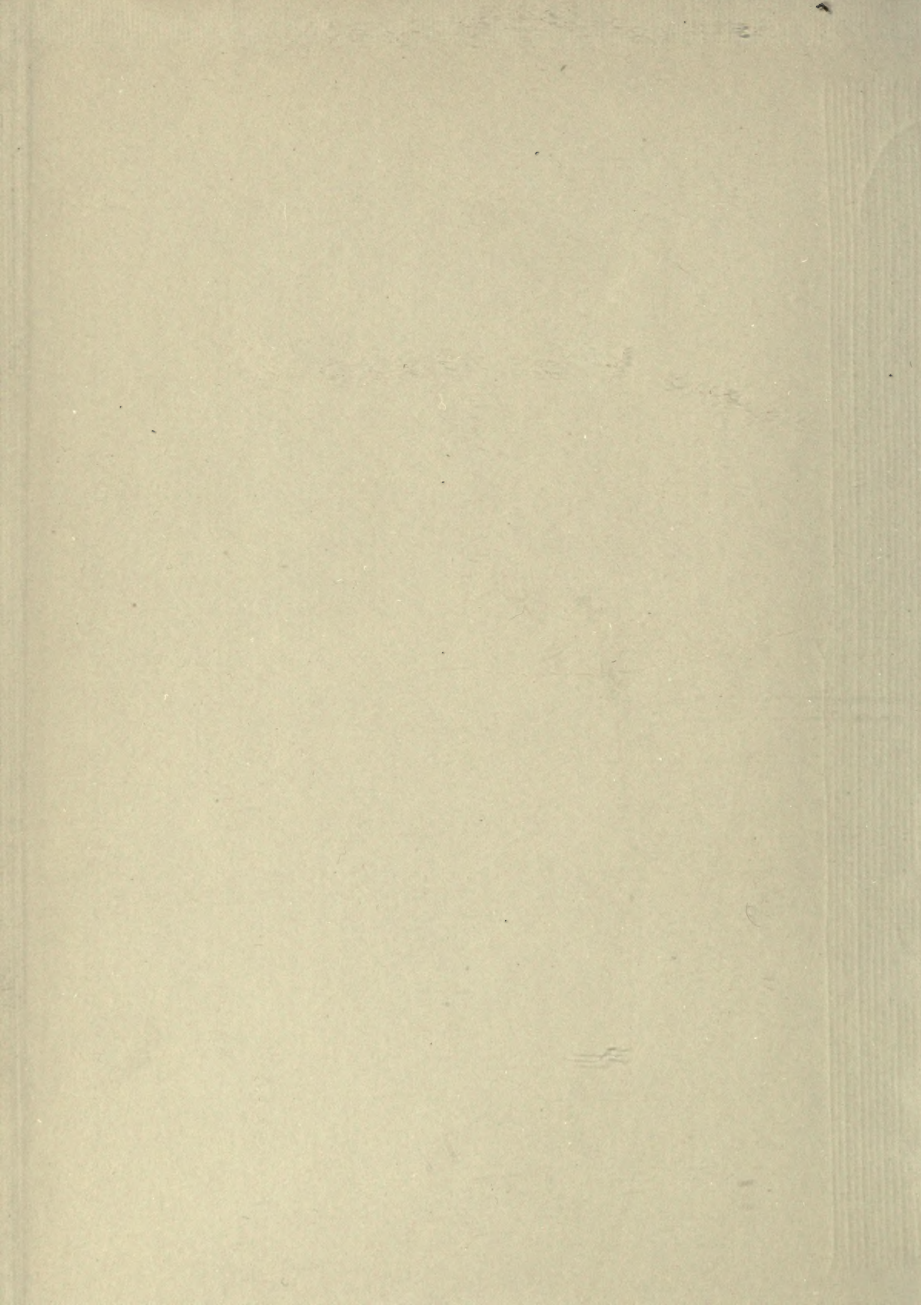


POETRY
OF
NIAGARA



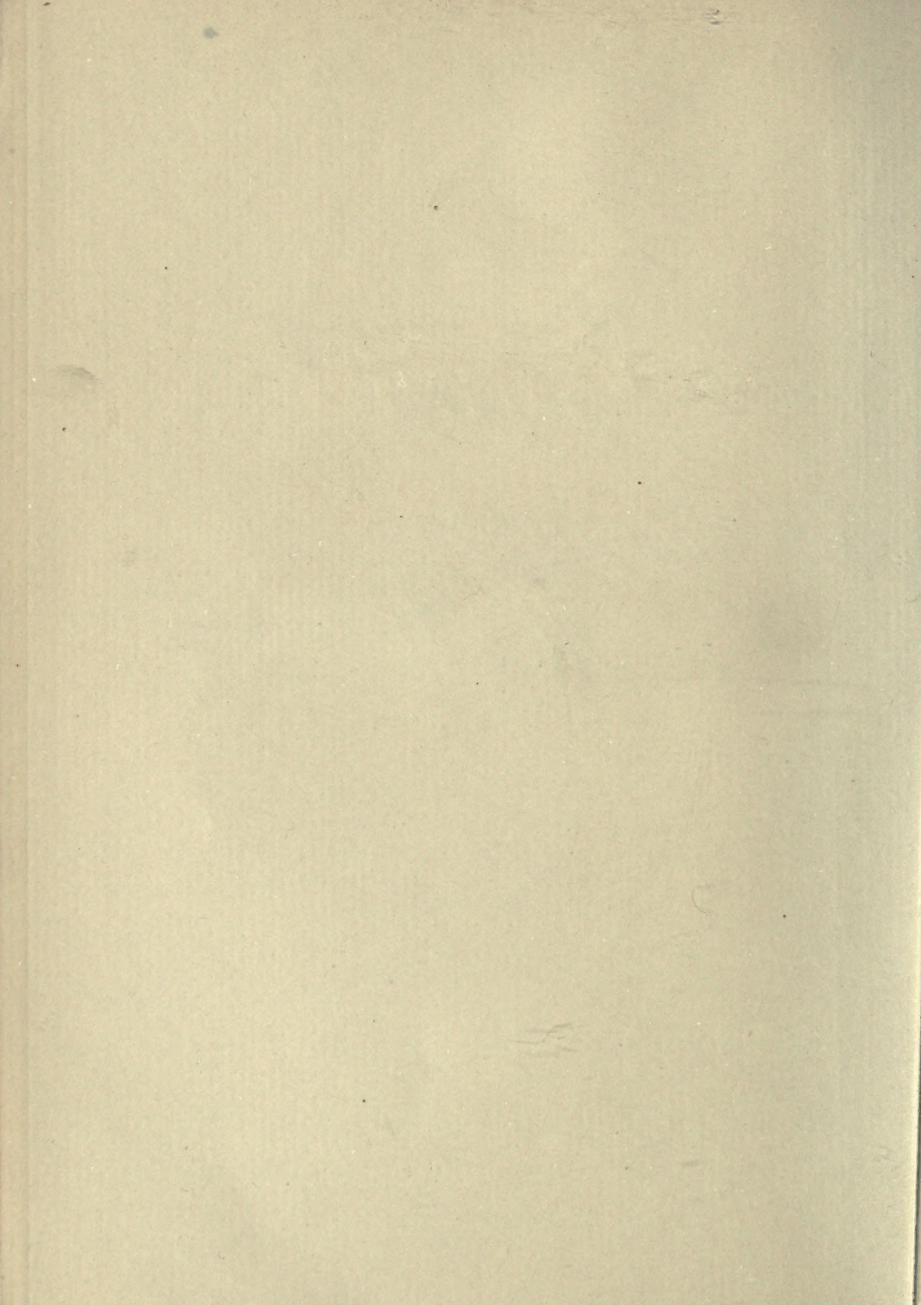


"Niagara - The tumult of the tears of God."

To my friend Grant Drake,


with sincere regards of
M. J. Hitchcock.

Mar. 9/66.

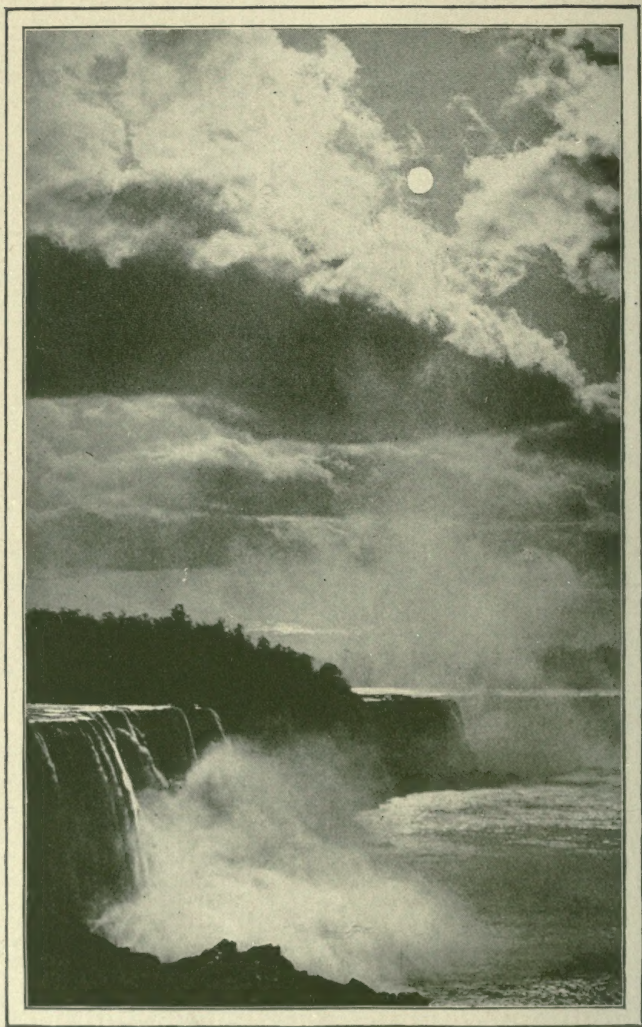


❧ *Poetry* ❧
of
NIAGARA

NIAGARA

 HERE Niagara's starry spray
Frozen on the cliff appears,
Like a giant's starting tears.

Moore



GENERAL VIEW — MOONLIGHT.

Poetry
of
NIAGARA

"Niagara! wonder of this western world,
And half the world beside! hail beauteous queen
Of cataracts!" An angel who had been
O'er heaven and earth, spoke thus, his bright
wings furled,
And knelt to Nature first, on this wild cliff unseen.

Maria Brooks



Compiled by
Myron T. Pritchard

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NIAGARA



THE first effect — the enduring one — of the tremendous spectacle of Niagara was peace — peace of mind, tranquillity, calm recollections of the dead, great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness; nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart, an image of beauty, to remain there changeless and indelibly until its pulses cease to beat forever.

Charles Dickens



CKNOWLEDGMENT is hereby gratefully made to Messrs. Harper & Brothers, Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company, The Century Company, and *The Independent* for permission to use copyrighted poems in this collection.



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THE FALLS OF NIAGARA



HE thoughts are strange that crowd
into my brain,

While I look upward to thee. It would
seem

As if God poured thee from his hollow
hand,

And hung his bow upon thine awful front;
And spoke in that loud voice, which
seemed to him

Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's
sake,

The sound of many waters; and had
bade

Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
And notch His centuries in the eternal
rocks.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Deep calleth unto deep. And what are
we,

That hear the question of that voice sub-
lime?

Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet, by thy thunder-
ing side?

Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In this short life, to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to
Him

Who drowned a world, and heaped the
waters far

Above its loftiest mountains?—a light
wave,

That breaks, and whispers of its Maker's
might.

John Gardner Calkins Brainard

AT NIAGARA



HERE at the chasm's edge behold
her lean

Trembling as, 'neath the charm,
A wild bird lifts no wing to 'scape from
harm;

Her very soul drawn to the glittering
green,
Smooth, lustrous, awful, lovely curve of
peril;

While far below the bending sea of beryl
Thunder and tumult — whence a billowy
spray
Enclouds the day.

What dream is hers? no dream hath
wrought that spell!

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

The long waves rise and sink ;
Pity that virgin soul on passion's brink,
Confronting Fate — swift, unescapable, —
Fate, which of nature, is the intent and
core,
And dark and strong as the steep river's
pour,
Cruel as love, and wild as love's first kiss !
Ah, God ! the abyss !

R. W. Gilder



GENERAL VIEW FROM NEW BRIDGE.

NIAGARA



LOW on forever, in thy glorious
robe

Of terror and of beauty. Yea, flow on
Unfathomed and resistless. God hath set
His rainbow on thy forehead; and the cloud
Mantled around thy feet. And He doth
give

Thy voice of thunder power to speak of
Him

Eternally, — bidding the lip of man
Keep silence — and upon thy rocky altar
pour

Incense of awe-struck praise.

Ah! who can dare
To lift the insect-trump of earthly hope,
Or love, or sorrow, mid the peal sublime

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Of thy tremendous hymn? Even Ocean
shrinks

Back from thy brotherhood, and all his
waves

Retire abashed. For he doth sometimes
seem

To sleep like a spent labourer, and recall
His wearied billows from their vexing
play,

And lull them to a cradle calm; but thou
With everlasting, undecaying tide,

Dost rest not, night or day. The morn-
ing stars,

When first they sang o'er young cre-
ation's birth,

Heard thy deep anthem; and those
wrecking fires,

That wait the archangel's signal to dis-
solve

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

This solid earth, shall find Jehovah's
name

Graven, as with a thousand diamond
spears

On thine unending volume.

Every leaf,

That lifts itself within thy wide domain,
Doth gather greenness from thy living
spray,

Yet tremble at the baptism. Lo!—yon
birds

Do boldly venture near, and bathe their
wing

Amid thy mist and foam. 'Tis meet for
them

To touch thy garment's hem, and lightly
stir

The snowy leaflets of thy vapour-wreath,
For they may sport unharmed amid the
cloud,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Or listen at the echoing gate of Heaven,
Without reproof. But, as for us, it seems
Scarce lawful, with our broken tones, to
speak

Familiarly of thee. Methinks, to tint
Thy glorious features with our pencil's
point,

Or woo thee to the tablet of a song,
Were profanation.

Thou dost make the soul
A wondering witness of thy majesty,
But as it presses with delirious joy
To pierce thy vestibule, dost chain its step,
And tame its rapture with the humbling
view

Of its own nothingness, bidding it stand
In the dread presence of the Invisible,
As if to answer to its God through thee.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney

NIAGARA FALLS



HERE'S nothing great or bright,
thou glorious Fall!

Thou mayest not to the fancy's sense re-
call,

The thunder-riven cloud, the lightning's
leap,

The stirring of the chambers of the
deep;

Earth's emerald green, and many tinted
dyes,

The fleecy whiteness of the upper skies;

The tread of armies thickening as they
come,

The boom of cannon and the beat of
drum;

The brow of beauty and the form of
grace,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

The passion and the prowess of our race;
The song of Homer in its loftiest hour,
The unresisted sweep of human power;
Britannia's trident on the azure sea,
America's young shout of Liberty!
Oh! may the waves which madden in
thy deep
There spend their rage nor climb the en-
circling steep;
And till the conflict of thy surges cease,
The nations on thy banks repose in peace.

Lord Morpeth

THE NIAGARA FALL



IS the boom of the fall with a heavy
pour,

Solemn and slow as a thunder cloud,

Majestic as the vast ocean's roar,

Through the green trees round its sing-
ing crowd;

And the light is as green as the emerald
grass,

Or the wide-leaved plants in the wet mo-
rass.

It sounds over all, and the rushing storms
Cannot wrinkle its temples, or wave its
hair.

It dwells alone in the pride of its form,
A lonely thing in the populous air.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

From the hanging cliffs it whirls away,
All seasons through, all the livelong day.

William Ellery Channing



PROSPECT POINT — MOONLIGHT.

NIAGARA



HOUGH the dusk has extinguished
the green

And the glow of the down-falling silver,
In my heart I prefer this subdued,
Cathedral-like gloom on the water:
When the fancy capriciously wills,
Nor loves to define or distinguish,
As a dream which enchants us with fear;
And scarce throbs the heart unaffrighted.

With a colour and voice of its own
I behold this wondrous creature
Move as a living thing.
And joyous with joy Titanic,
Its brothers in sandstone are locked,
Yet from their graves speak to it.
It sings to them as it moves,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And the hills and uplands re-echo,
The sunshine kindles its scales,
And they gleam with opal and sapphire.
It uplifts its tawny mane,
With its undulations of silver,
And tosses through showers of foam,
Its flanks seamed with shadow and sun-
shine.

Like the life of man is its course,
Born far in some cloudy sierra,
Dimpled and wayward and small,
O'erleaped by the swerving roebuck ;
But enlarging with mighty growth,
And wearing wide lakes for its bracelets,
It moves, the king of streams,
As man wears the crown of his manhood.
It shouts to the loving fields,
Which toss to it flowers and perfume ;
It eddies and winds round its isles,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And its kisses thrill them with rapture ;
Till it fights in its strength and o'er-
comes

The rocks which would bar its progress.
The earth hears its cries of rage,
As it tramples them in its rushing,
Leaping, exultant above
And smiting them in derision ;
Till at length, its life fulfilled,
Sublime in majestic calmness,
It submits to death, and falls
With a beauty it wins in dying,
Still, wan, prone, till curtains of foam en-
close it,
To arise a spirit of mist,
And return to the Heaven it came from.

As deepens the night, all is changed,
And the joy of my dream is extinguished :

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

I hear but a measureless prayer,
As of multitudes wailing in anguish ;
I see but one fluttering plunge,
As if angels were falling from Heaven.
Indistinctly, at times, I behold
Cuthullin and Ossian's old heroes
Look at me with eyes sad with tears,
And a summons to follow their flying,
Absorbed in wild, eerie rout,
Of wind-swept and desolate spectres.
As deepens the night, a clear cry
At times cleaves the boom of the waters ;
Comes with it a terrible sense
Of suffering extreme and forever.
The beautiful rainbow is dead,
And gone are the birds that sang through
it.
The incense so mounting is now
A stifling, sulphurous vapour.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

The abyss is the hell of the lost,
Hopeless falling to fires everlasting.

Thomas Gold Appleton

NIAGARA



PLENDOUR supreme of constant
majesty,

Of towering passion, overpowering charm,
At last, mine eyes behold thee as thou
art —

In all the lightness of thy moving grace;
In all the whiteness of thy soaring spray;
In all the brightness of thy might!

At last,
Mine ears drink in thy voice miracu-
lous,
O plunging mountain full of thunder-
songs
Defiant or triumphant, echoing aye
Through vasts of day and night!



HORSE SHOE FALLS FROM BELOW.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

O Shape beyond

All wingèd imagery of magic words
Most musical, by ancient bards bequeathed
To spell the hearts of ever-coming men,
At last, I grasp, I clasp thee; and my
soul,

Struck speechless in thy Cavern of the
Winds,

Breathlessly burns with sharp, voluptuous
ache

To dash herself against thy torrent breast
And join the awful Angels of thy fall
Perpetual on the crags of Agony —
Victorious Agony of glorious doom!

O perilous bridge 'mid gusts of dazzling
pearl,

Or where a diamond storm enshrouds the
way.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Thou seem'st like Life a span 'twixt Day
and Night ;

For tho' eternal rainbows crown the rocks,
Halos of Hope, charmed circles of high
Faith,

Commanding entrance through the chasms
of Doubt,

To deeps of nobler knowledge and soul-
strength,

Yet all this beauty overwhelms the mind
By clash of contrast with our littleness.

.

So, Heart of Mine,

Oh ! Heart of All, stand up and take the
sun !

Seize, for 't is thine, thy sovereignty of
Light !


Night with her pale Infinitude of Stars,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Nor Ocean, nor the Mountains, nor e'en
Thou,
Niagara, with all thy loveliness,
Can match, in possibilities of growth
To Power, to Beauty, to Sublimity,
That noblest Mystery, the Soul of Man.

Henry Austin

NIAGARA

ROUD swaying pendant of a crystal
chain,
On fair Columbia's rich and bounteous
breast,
With beaded lakes that necklace-like re-
tain
Heaven's stainless blue with golden sun-
light blest!
What other land can boast a gem so
bright!
With colors born of sun and driven
spray —
A brooch of glory, amulet of might,
Where all the irised beauties softly stray.
Ay, more — God's living voice, Niagara,
thou!

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Proclaiming wide the anthem of the
free;
The starry sky the crown upon thy brow,
Thy ceaseless chant a song of Liberty.
But this thy birthright, this thy sweetest
dower,
Yon arching rainbow — Love still span-
ning Power.

Wallace Bruce

NIAGARA



REMENDOUS torrent! for an instant hush

The terrors of thy voice, and cast aside
Those wide-involving shadows, that my
eyes

May see the fearful beauty of thy face!
I am not all unworthy of thy sight;
For from my very boyhood have I loved,
Shunning the meaner track of common
minds,

To look on Nature in her loftier moods.
At the fierce rushing of the hurricane,
At the near bursting of the thunderbolt,
I have been touched with joy; and when
the sea,

Lashed by the wind, hath rocked my
bark, and showed



AMERICAN FALLS FROM BELOW.

Poetry of Niagara

Its yawning caves beneath me, I have
loved

Its dangers and the wrath of elements.
But never yet the madness of the sea
Hath moved me as thy grandeur moves
me now.

Thou flowest on in quiet, till thy waves
Grow broken midst the rocks ; thy current
then

Shoots onward like the irresistible course
Of Destiny. Ah, terribly they rage —
The hoarse and rapid whirlpools there!
My brain

Grows wild, my senses wander, as I gaze
Upon the hurrying waters ; and my
sight

Vainly would follow, as towards the
verge

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Sweeps the wide torrent. Waves innu-
merable

Meet there and madden — waves innu-
merable

Urge on and overtake the waves before,
And disappear in thunder and in foam.

They reach, they leap the barrier — the
abyss

Swallows insatiable the sinking waves.
A thousand rainbows arch them, and the
woods

Are deafened with the roar. The violent
shock

Shatters to vapour the descending sheets.
A cloudy whirlwind fills the gulf, and
heaves

The mighty pyramid of circling mist
To Heaven. The solitary hunter near
Pauses with terror in the forest shades.

Poetry of Niagara

What seeks thy restless eye? Why are
not here,
About the joys of this abyss, the palms —
Ah, the delicious palms — that on the
plains
Of my own native Cuba spring and spread
Their thickly foliated summits to the
sun,
And, in the breathings of the ocean air,
Wave soft beneath the heaven's unspotted
blue?


But no, Niagara — thy forest pines
Are fitter coronal for thee. The palm,
The effeminate myrtle, and frail rose may
grow
In gardens, and give out their fragrance
there,
Unmanning him who breathes it. Thine
it is

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

To do a nobler office. Generous minds
Behold thee, and are moved, and learn to
 rise
Above earth's frivolous pleasures; they
 partake
Thy grandeur, at the utterance of thy
 name.

Jose Maria Heredia

NIAGARA

HAT wild convulsion in the ages
past

Shook thee to such immeasurable unrest,
Oh, mad Niagara? Did the huge crest
Of some black mountain, splintered by a
blast

From Heaven down-bolted, leave these
fissures vast

Whence rush thy waters? Or was ocean
pressed

From its storm-beaten shores, to dash thy
breast

And hurl out rage from thee, while Time
shall last?

Rage on, imperial mystery, that
thou art;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Chance, in the azoic age, with
wonders rife,
At mandate of the gods, from out
earth's heart,
In embryo doomed to everlasting
strife,
Thou sprang'st defiant, thunder-
ing to thy part,
Magnificent and terrible, as Life.

Rage on, for giant raging thou may'st
show,
Through veins that interlace the land,
thy power,
And with thy foaming passion, bring to
flower
The genius of man; may'st writhing
go
Like a colossal serpent, to and fro,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Winding through ribs of steel that mas-
sive tower,
And so imprisoned, strike the zenith hour
When science shall supremest secret know :
 I liken thee to soul wherein is
 pent
Divinest madness, that song surg-
ing keeps,
'Till by unconquerable forces rent,
To mighty music it majestic
sweeps.
As the great Odyssey blind Homer
sent
Crashing sublimely down eternal
steeps.

C. E. Whiton-Stone

NIAGARA FALLS



O Niagara! down the depth profound

Plunges thy broad and mighty gleaming
flood,

Fed by vast lakes, in symbol union bound.

On Table Rock, now fall'n, in youth I
stood

Gazing on all the scene in rapt'rous mood.

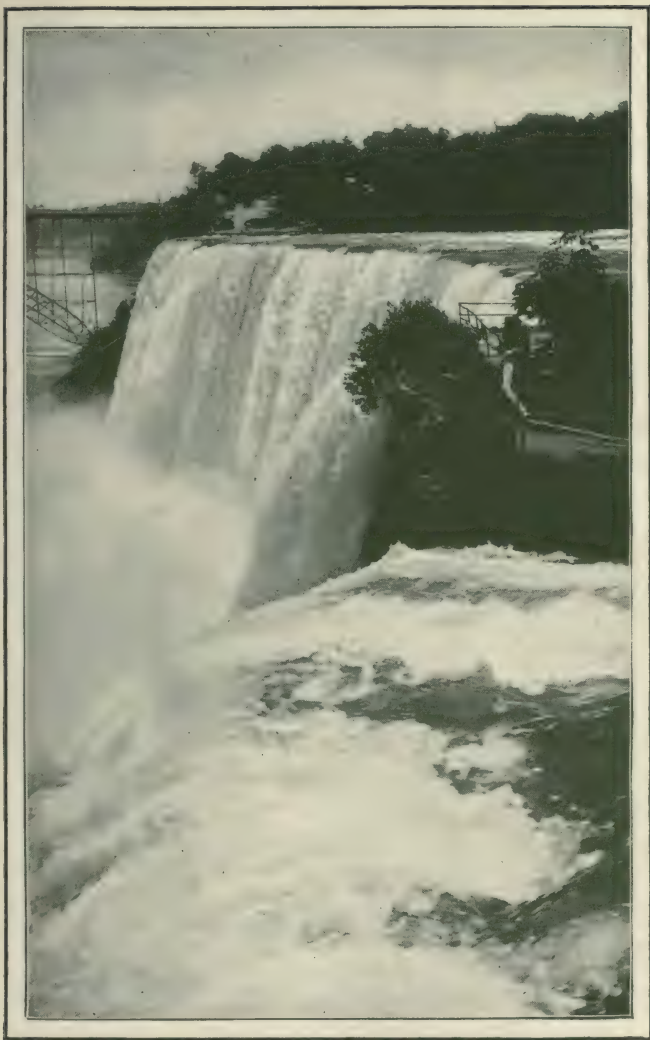
There, at my level, the majestic stream

O'er long curv'd cliff, with ample plenitude,

Begins its stoop in reg'lar bending gleam;

Then falls till shape is lost in foam and
misty steam.

Perched on thin leaf of overhanging
rock,



AMERICAN FALLS FROM GOAT ISLAND.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

I venture to the edge and look below ;
I see the eddying depth ; and feel the shock,
The shore all trembling at the earthquake
blow.

Ah, what if sudden dizziness should grow,
As, at Passaic cliff, in her who fell ?
Or what if shock my foothold ledge o'er-
throw,
And to abyss I sink with loosen'd shell ?
The solitary fate no tongue could tell.

But though no brother man with me
did stand,
Yet God was there who scooped the basin
wide
And poured the flood out from his hollow
hand,
Yet God was there, whose voice on ev'ry
side

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Issued in thunders from the angry tide,
Yet God was there, the cloud-built arch to
 rear,
With mingled hues of beauteous bright-
 ness dyed,
Symbol once caused o'er wider flood t'
 appear,
Blest pledge of earth's escape from destiny
 severe.


Stand here, mortal presumptuous! and
 say —
While ear is stunn'd with torrent's cease-
 less roar,
And solid rocks do tremble with dismay —
Cannot God's hand the flood of ven-
 geance pour,
To sweep the proud, where they will boast
 no more?

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Let warring tribes this voice of thunder
hear,
And hush their rage, lest whirlpool wrath
devour!
Christian! the bow of promise shines forth
clear,
And thou mayst smile secure, when earth
shall quake with fear.

William Allen

NIAGARA

 **I** STOOD within a vision's spell ;
I saw, I heard. The liquid thunder
Went pouring to its foaming hell,
And it fell,
Ever, ever fell,
Into that invisible abyss that opened under.

I stood upon a speck of ground ;
Before me fell a stormy ocean.
I was like a captive bound ;
And around
A universe of sound
Troubled the heavens with ever-quivering
motion.

Down, down forever — down, down forever,
ever,



HORSE SHOE FALLS, CANADA, WINTER.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Something falling, falling, falling,
Up, up forever—up, up forever,
 Resting never,
 Boiling up forever,
Steam-clouds shot up with thunder-bursts
 appalling.

A tone that since the birth of man
 Was never for a moment broken,
A word that since the world began,
 And waters ran,
 Hath spoken still to man—
Of God and of Eternity hath spoken.

.

And in that vision, as it passed,
 Was gathered terror, beauty, power;
And still, when all has fled, too fast,
 And I at last
 Dream of the dreamy past,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

My heart is full when lingering on that
hour.

A n o n y m o u s

NIAGARA



AS aught like this descended, since
the fountains

Of the Great Deep broke up, in catar-
acts hurled,

And climbing lofty hills, eternal moun-
tains,

Poured wave on wave above a buried
world?

Yon tides are raging, as when storms
have striven,

And the vexed seas, awaking from
their sleep,

Are rough with foam, and Neptune's
flocks are driven

In myriads o'er the green and azure
deep.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Ere yet they fall, mark (where that
mighty current
Comes like an army from its mountain
home)

How fiercely yon wild steeds amid the
torrent,
With their dark flanks, and manes and
crests of foam,

Speed to their doom — yet in the awful
centre,

Where the wild waves rush madliest to
the steep,

Just ere that white unfathomed gulf they
enter,

Rear back in horror from the headlong
leap ;

Then, maddening, plunge — a thousand
more succeeding

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Sweep onward, troop on troop, again to
urge

The same fierce flight, as rapid and un-
heeding —

Again to pause in terror on the verge.

.

Oft to an eye half closed, as if in solving
Some mighty, mystic problem — half it
seems

Like some vast crystal wheel, ever re-
volving,

Whose motion, earth's — whose axle,
earth's extremes.

We gaze and gaze, half lost in dreamy
pleasure,

On all that slow majestic wave reveals,
While Fancy idly, vainly strives to mea-
sure

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

How vast the cavern which its veil con-
ceals.

.

Whence come ye, O wild waters? by
what scenes

Of Majesty and Beauty have ye flowed,
In the wide continent that intervenes,
Ere yet ye mingle in this common road?

The Mountain King, upon his rocky
throne,

Laves his broad feet amid your rushing
streams,

And many a vale of loveliness unknown
Is softly mirrored in their crystal gleams.

They come—from haunts a thousand
leagues away,

From ancient mounds, with deserts wide
between,



CAVE OF THE WINDS.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Cliffs, whose tall summits catch the part-
ing day,
And prairies blooming in eternal green ;

Yet the bright valley, and the flower-lit
meadow,
And the drear waste of wilderness, all
past —

Like that strange Life, of which thou art
the shadow,
Must take the inevitable plunge at last.

Whither we know not — but above the
wave

A gentle, white-robed spirit sorrowing
stands,

Type of the rising from that darker grave,
Which waits the wanderer from Life's
weary lands.

Poetry of Niagara

How long these wondrous forms, these
 colors splendid,
 Their glory o'er the wilderness have
 thrown!

How long that mighty anthem has as-
 cended
 To Him who wakened its eternal tone!

That everlasting utterance thou shalt
 raise,

 A thousand ages ended, still the same,
When this poor heart, that fain would
 add its praise,
 Has mouldered to the nothing whence
 it came.

When the white dwellings of man's busy
 brood,

 Now reared in myriads o'er the peo-
 pled plain,


P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Like snows have vanished, and the an-
cient wood
Shall echo to the eagle's shriek again.

And all the restless crowds that now re-
joice,
And toil and traffic, in their eager
moods,
Shall pass—and nothing save thine awful
voice
Shall break the hush of these vast soli-
tudes.

Henry Howard Brownell

NIAGARA

ESCRIBE Niagara! Ah, who shall
dare

Attempt the indescribable, and train
Thought's fragile wing to skim the heavy
air,

Wet with the cataract's incessant rain?
The glowing "muse of fire" invoked in
vain

By Shakespeare, who shall hope from
Heaven to win?

And "burning words" alone become the
strain,

Which to the mind would bring the awful
din

Where seas in thunder fall, and eddying
oceans spin.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Long had the savage on thy glorious
shroud,

Fringed with vast foam-wreaths, gaz'd
with stoic eye

And deemed that on thy rising rainbow
cloud

The wings of the Great Spirit hovered
nigh ;

And, as he marked the solemn woods re-
ply

In echoes to thy rolling thunder tone,
He heard His voice upon the breeze go by,
And his heart bowed — for to the heart
alone

God speaking through His works, makes
what he utters known.

But ages passed away — and to the West
Came Europe's sons to seek for fame or
gold ;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And one, perchance, more daring than the
rest,
Lured by the chase or by strange stories
told
By Indian guide of oceans downward
rolled,
Felt on his throbbing ear thy far-off roar,
Then sped the mighty wonder to behold,
Thy voice around him and thy cloud be-
fore,
Till breathless — trembling — rapt — he
trod thy foaming shore.

Upward he gazed to where with furious
hiss
The waters spurn the precipice and leap
Into the vexed and indistinct abyss,
Where Rage and Tumult ceaseless battle
keep,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Filling with roar monotonous and deep,
The wearied echo;—there he fixed his
gaze,
Like one entranced who fears to break
his sleep,
Lest the wild vision fade that sleep doth
raise,
All thought locked up and chained in
stern and strange amaze.

Till, slowly rallying from the first sur-
prise,
Thought from its magic prison breaks at
last —
The gazer from the foam-whirl lifts his
eyes,
And scans the whole arena wild and vast;
From point to point his eager glances cast,
Take by degrees thy wide circumference in,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And as his speechless wonder slowly
passed.

Delight succeeded, deep, intense and keen,
Heart, soul and sense absorbed in that un-
rivalled scene.

Then through his mind like lightning
flashed the thought,

Once o'er the Patriarch's soul in Bethel
thrown,

"Sure, God is with me, and I knew it
not ;

I see His power in yon majestic zone
Of mighty waters, and its thunder tone
Brings to my ear His voice — and deeply
felt

And almost seen His presence reigns
alone."

Then meekly by the rock the wanderer
knelt,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Feeling in awe and love his heart's full
fountain melt.

And long with shaded eye and bended
head

He prayed before the Temple's wondrous
veil,

While from its foot, in ceaseless eddies
spread,

The mist-cloud rose, like incense, on the
gale;

And half he deemed that on its pinion
frail

His prayers, upborne, would blessed ac-
ceptance know,

He rose with gladdened eye and heart to
hail

Mercy's fair type and seal, the rainbow's
glow

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Spanning with calm embrace the troubled
scene below.

And when the westering daybeam warned
him back,

Lingering he stood, as spellbound by the
strain,

And oft he started on his homeward track,
And oft returned, one parting glance to
gain;

And twilight had usurped its fitful reign
Ere to thy foam his last farewell he bade,
Then like an arrow, o'er the woody plain,
Homeward he hurried through the deep-
ening shade,

Again in dreams to view thy wonders
round him spread.

And oft alone, and oft with friends, he
came

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

To scan thy charms and worship at thy
shrine,

And feel again devotion's hallowed flame
Blaze in thy presence, fanned with breath
divine:

And oft from morning until day's decline
He sat and mused beside thee, for his eye
Saw nowhere majesty and grace like thine:
And in his soul thy mighty minstrelsy
Woke stern and glorious thoughts and
visions wild and high.

In silence long forgot the wanderer sleeps:
But still as when thou met'st his startled
gaze,

Thy glorious scene the heart in wonder
steeps

Of him who seeks thee in these later days:
Sublime in simple grandeur! Art can
raise

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

No rival to thy throne, nor words convey
Thine image to the mind, though noblest
 lays
Have vied in thy description. Day by day
Thy roar shall speak of God till nature
 fade away.

I. H. Clinch



HORSE SHOE FALLS FROM GOAT ISLAND.

GOAT ISLAND



PEACE and perpetual quiet are
around,

Upon the erect and dusky file of stems,
Sustaining yon far roof, expelling sound,
Through which the sky sparkles (a rain
of gems

Lost in the forest's depth of shade), the
sun

At times doth shoot an arrow of pure
gold,

Flecking majestic trunks with hues of
dun,

Veining their barks with silver, and be-
traying

Secret initials tied in true love knots ;
Of hearts no longer through green alleys
straying,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

But stifled in the world's distasteful grots.
The silence is monastic, save in spots
Where heaves a glimmer of uncertain
light,
And rich wild tones enchant the wood-
land night.

Thomas Gold Appleton

Poetry of Niagara

NYMPH OF NIAGARA¹



NYMPH of Niagara! Sprite of the
mist!

With a wild magic my brow thou hast
kissed;

I am thy slave, and my mistress art thou,
For thy wild kiss of magic is still on my
brow.

I feel it as first when I knelt before thee,
With thy emerald robe flowing brightly
and free,²

Fringed with the spray-pearls and float-
ing in mist,
Thus 't was my brow with wild magic
you kissed.

¹ Written immediately after leaving the Falls.

² The water in the centre of the great fall is intensely green and
of gem-like brilliancy.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Thine am I still, and I'll never forget
The moment the spell on my spirit was
set;

Thy chain but a foam-wreath, yet
stronger by far

Than the manacle, steel-wrought, for cap-
tive of war.

For the steel it will rust, and the war will
be o'er,

And the manacled captives be free as be-
fore;

While the foam-wreath will bind me for-
ever to thee;

I love the enslavement and would not be
free!

Nymph of Niagara! play with the breeze,
Sport with the fawns 'mid the old forest
trees;


P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Blush into rainbows at kiss of the sun,
From the gleam of his dawn till his bright
course be run.

I'll not be jealous, for pure is thy sport-
ing,
Heaven-born is all that around thee is
courting;
Still will I love thee, sweet Sprite of the
mist,
As first when my brow with wild magic
you kissed!

Samuel Lover

NIAGARA ABOVE THE
CATARACT

 RIVER of banks and woods and
waters green,

With all of beauty to attract the eye,
Why leaps my heart, as past thy shores
we fly?

Art thou not quiet as an infant's
dream,

Pure as its thoughts, unruffled as its
brow

When circled by its mother's arms in
sleep,

While o'er it she doth still her vigil keep?
Then wherefore leaps my heart so wildly
now?

Hark to that roar, deep as the thunder's
tone,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And in the distance see the sun's last
ray

Falling on clouds of never-ceasing spray.

In its wild beatings is my heart alone?

Thou glidest on to meet that battling
flood,

Fearless as warrior to the field of blood !

Clara J. Moore

NIAGARA BELOW THE
CATARACT.

WITHIN a temple's towering walls
I stand —

A temple vast ; the heaven is its dome.
No corniced crag was hewn by human
hand,

Nor by it wrought the tracery of foam ;
The inlaid floor of emerald and pearl
Heaves at the hidden organ's thun-
derous peal,

While round and up the clouds of in-
cense curl,

Shrouding the chancel where the bil-
lows kneel.

Ah ! bow your heads. It is a fitting
place

Poetry of Niagara

For solemn thought, for deep and earnest prayer;
For here the finger of our God I trace,
Beneath, above, around me, everywhere;
He hollowed out this grand and mighty nave,
And robed his altar with the ocean wave!

Clara J. Moore

THE CATARACT ISLE

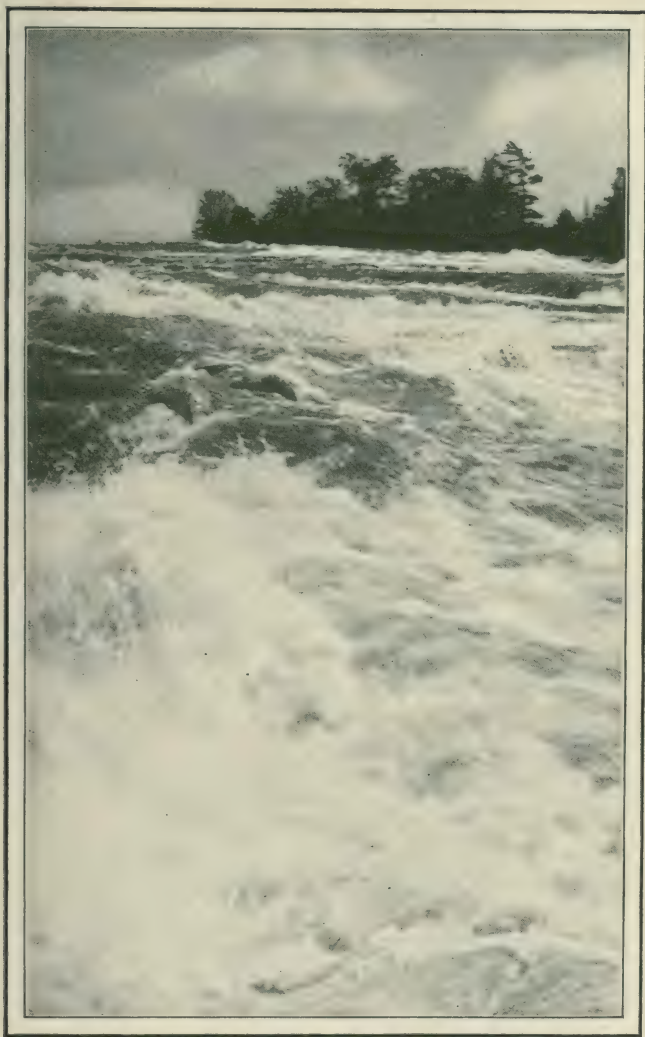


WANDERED through the ancient
wood

That crowns the cataract isle.
I heard the roaring of the flood
And saw its wild, fierce smile.

Through tall tree-tops the sunshine
flecked
The huge trunks and the ground;
And the pomp of fullest summer decked
The island all around.

And winding paths led all along
Where friends and lovers strayed;
And voices rose with laugh and song
From sheltered nooks of shade.



RAPIDS ABOVE THE FALLS.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Through opening forest vistas whirled
The rapids' foamy flash,
As they boiled along and plunged and
swirled,
And neared the last long dash.

I crept to the island's outer verge,
Where the grand, broad river fell —
Fell sheer down mid foam and surge,
In a white and blinding hell !

The steady rainbow gayly shone
Above the precipice ;
And a deep, low tone of a thunder-groan
Rolled up from the drear abyss.

And all the day sprang up the spray,
Where the broad, white sheets were
poured,
And fell around in showery play,
And upward curled and soared.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And all the night those sheets of white
Gleamed through the spectral mist,
When o'er the isle the broad moonlight
The wintry foam-flakes kissed.

Mirrored within thy dreamy thought,
I see it, feel it all —
That island with sweet visions fraught,
That awful waterfall.

With sun-flecked trees, and birds, and
flowers,
The Isle of Life is fair:
But one deep voice thrills through its
hours,
One spectral form is there!


A power no mortal can resist,
Rolling forever on —
A floating cloud, a shadowy mist,
Eternal undertone!

Poetry of Niagara

And through the sunny vistas gleam
The fate, the solemn smile;
Life is Niagara's rushing stream,
Its dreams — that peaceful isle!

C. P. Cranch

THE LEAP OF NIAGARA

OAR loud, ye winds! ye awful thunders peal!

And instant rouse them from their fatal sleep,

Ere (cruel chance) they sink amid the deep,

Whose secrets Death permits not to reveal.

They wake! O heavens! What now avails their zeal?

Precipitous their maddening course they keep;

And reeling now they make the shuddering leap,

Down-dashed 'mid watery worlds with all their weal!

Poetry of Niagara

And thus are they forgot! Not such the
fate

Of that immortal maid — enchantress
sweet —

Who from Lucadía's rock (provoked by
Hate)


Plunged fearless in the waves that round
it beat.

Her name the sighing winds still breathe
around,

And Sappho, all the mournful caves re-
sound.

Henry Pickering

THE WHIRLPOOL OF NIAGARA
RIVER VIEWED ON A SAB-
BATH MORNING

“T was a Sabbath of the Soul”;
I heard the distant cataract roll
Its choral anthem high,
Whilst from the forest's deep repose
A breath of mingled fragrance rose,
Like incense to the sky

Its azure dome was o'er my head,
The green leaves started at my tread,
As if disturbed in prayer;
'T was nature's worship — we alone
Could jar its harp-strings — not a tone
But breathed in concert there.



*GREAT WHIRLPOOL RAPIDS — LOOKING
DOWN.*

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

I saw, below my verdant seat,
The swift Niagara at my feet,
 As in a prison bound;
A rocky bed, with graceful bend
And narrow outlets at each end,
 Encircled it around.

While the proud rapids seem to pause
Indignantly to view the cause
 Of their unwont delay —
In solemn majesty, they turned,
Lingering, as if themselves they spurned,
 In durance thus to stay.

In circling eddies round and round,
I saw the careless driftwood bound,
 And watched it on its way,
Borne gayly on the rapids' crest,
Till on the water-giant's breast,
 The passive victim lay.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Within the whirlpool's false embrace,
Condemned with never-ceasing pace
 Their aimless course to run,
Without a hope or goal in view,
An endless journey to pursue,
 Beginning, never done.

Yet viewlessly those links confine,
Brighter than diamond sparks they
 shine,
 And merrily they flow,
Whilst each fair shore stands smiling
 by,
And still the dancing waters fly,
 To music, as they go.

And then I felt like one who dreams,
And all his airy visions deems
 Realities of life;
The senseless logs like men were seen, —

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

A metamorphosis, I ween,
Not much with truth at strife.

For is not human life a stream,
Whose rapids (cares and pleasures) seem
To us but infant's play,
Till, into passion's current hurled,
Amid its restless vortex whirled,
We chase the hours away?

What are the chains the hands have
wrought?
The strongest chain is made of thought,
The poet said of yore;
Spellbound by habit, thus we see,
The ocean of eternity,
Yet seek its bliss no more.


O would we nature's lessons read,
And draw our pure, exalted creed
From her celestial lore,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

All earth would then be hallowed ground,
In every stream some virtue found
The spirit's woes to cure.

Susan Hill Todd

NIAGARA IN SPRING

H, could I gaze forever on thy face,
Unwearied still, thou matchless
waterfall,

Whose twining spells of majesty and grace
My ardent sense bewilder and enthrall!

In all my moods thy charms' puissant
sway

Enforce my will their master-spell to own;
My heart leaps at thy voice — or grave
or gay —

And every chord is vibrant to thy tone.

So many years I have come back to stand,
With reverent awe, before thy glorious
shrine —

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

So close and long thy lineaments I've
scanned —
It seemed thou should'st grow something
less divine.

I know thy face, its shifting glooms and
smiles,
As cloud or sun upon thy bosom lies ;
Thy wrathful guise, thy witching rain-
bow wiles
Can wake no more for me the sweet sur-
prise.

I know thy voice — its terror and its glee
Have in my ear so oft their changes rung ;
Nor forest winds nor anthems of the sea
Speak to my soul with more familiar
tongue.
My feet have scaled thy storm-scarred
battlements,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

And pressed the moss most emerald with
thy tears ;
And still profaned thy lucent caverns,
whence
The neophyte comes pale with ghostly
fears.

Yet, as the more of God the soul perceives,
And nigher Him is drawn, it worships
more ;
So, in my heart, its matchless beauty
leaves
Constraint, in thine, His grandeur to adore.

Within thy courts I come this vernal day,
Ere Fashion's chimes invite the thought-
less throng ;
Almost alone I watch thy curling spray,
And lose my breath to swell thy ceaseless
song.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

I mark the flowers upon thy marge that
 blow,
Sweet violets and campanule's white bells;
Their azure shines unblanched, unblushed
 their snow:
These timid things feel not, as I, thy
 spells.

And in thy woods the birds heed not thy
 roar,
Where the brown thrush and painted
 oriole,
All unabashed, their tides of song out-
 pour,
As if thy floods in terror did not roll.

They do not know the flowers and birds
 around,
How wonderful, how grand, how dread
 thou art!

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

But I, transfixed by every sight and
sound,
Stand worshipping thy Maker, in my
heart.

I must go back where tides of commerce
flow,
And the dull roar of traffic cleaves the air ;
But in my heart sweet memories shall
glow,
And to my dreams shall summon visions
fair.

Niagara! thou wilt freshen all my
thought,
And cool the breath of fevered noons for
me!
My days shall lapse with thy remem-
brance fraught,
Thy voices chant my nights' weird lullaby.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a


Great torrent, speed thee to the lake and
 sea,
With tireless smoke of spray and thun-
 d'rous roar ;
I bless my God for all thy joy to me,
Though I should see thy marvelous face
 no more.

W. C. Richards

Poetry of Niagara

AVERY. 1853

I.

LL night long they heard in the
houses beside the shore,
Heard, or seemed to hear, through the
multitudinous roar,
Out of the hell of the rapids as 't were a
lost soul's cries,—
Heard and could not believe; and the
morning mocked their eyes,
Showing where wildest and fiercest the
waters leaped and ran
Raving round him and past, the visage
of a man
Clinging, or seeming to cling, to the trunk
of a tree that, caught
Fast in the rocks below, scarce out of the
surges raught.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

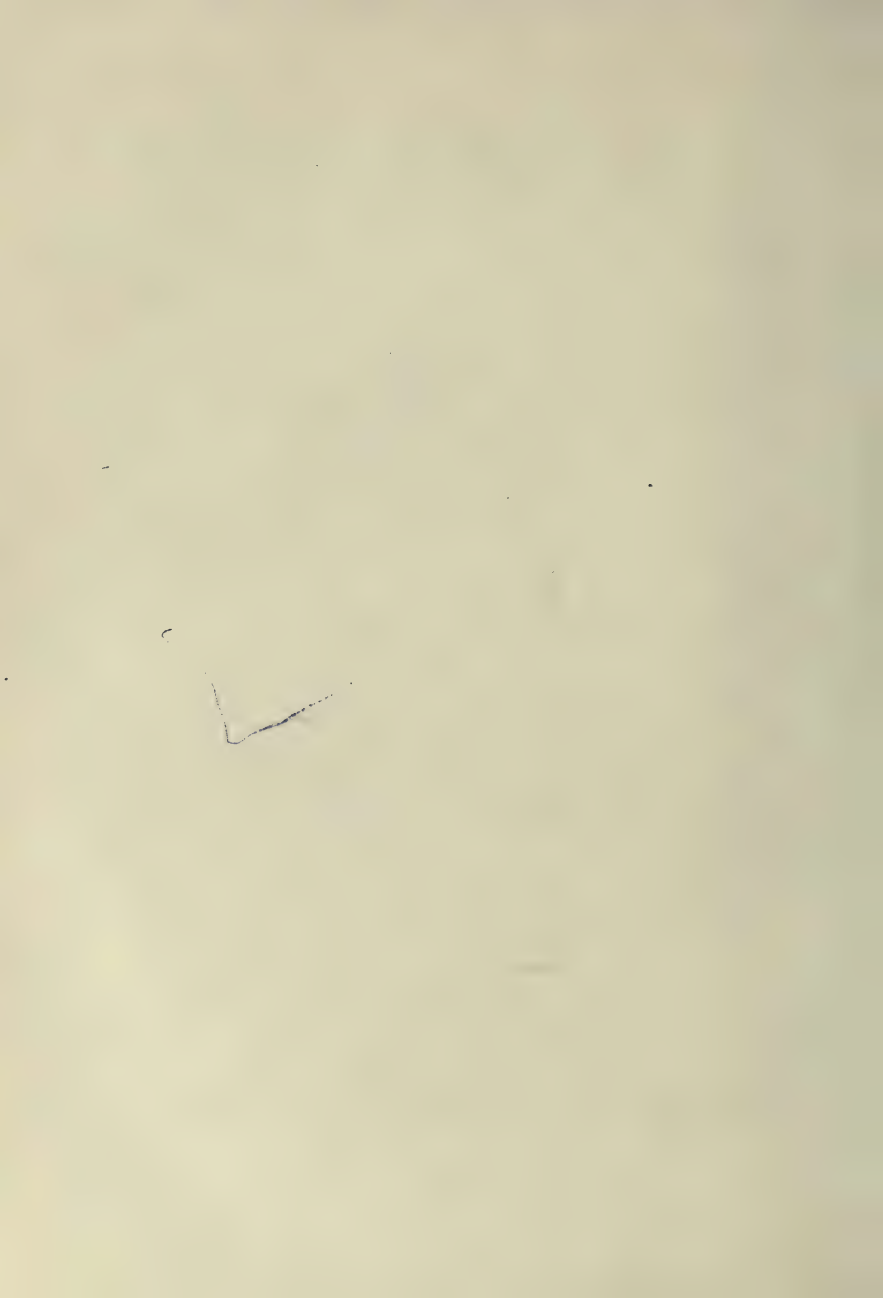
Was it a life, could it be, to yon slender
hope that clung?
Shrill, above all the tumult, the answer-
ing terror rung.

II.

Under the weltering rapids a boat from
the bridge is drowned,
Over the rocks the lines of another are
tangled and wound;
And the long, fateful hours of the morn-
ing have wasted soon,
As it had been in some blessed trance,
and now it is noon.
Hurry, now with the raft! But O, build
it strong and staunch,
And to the lines and treacherous rocks
look well as you launch!



AMERICAN FALLS FROM CANADA.



Poetry of Niagara

Over the foamy tops of the waves, and
their foam-sprent sides,

Over the hidden reefs, and through the
embattled tides,

Onward rushes the raft, with many a
lurch and leap, —

Lord! if it strike him loose, from the hold
he scarce can keep!

No! through all peril unharmed, it
reaches him harmless at last,

And to its proven strength he lashes his
weakness fast.

Now, for the shore? But steady, steady,
my men, and slow;

Taut, now, the quivering lines; now
slack; and so, let her go!

Thronging the shores around stand the
pitying multitude;

Wan as his own are their looks, and a
nightmare seems to brood

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Heavy upon them, and heavy the silence
hangs on all,
Save for the rapids' plunge, and the thunder
of the fall.
But on a sudden thrills from the people
still and pale,
Chorusing his unheard despair, a desperate
wail:
Caught on a lurking point of rock, it
sways and swings,
Sport of the pitiless waters, the raft to
which he clings.

III.

All the long afternoon it idly swings and
sways:
And on the shore the crowd lifts up its
hands and prays:

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Lifts to Heaven and wrings the hands so
helpless to save,
Prays for the mercy of God on him whom
the rock and the wave
Battle for, fettered betwixt them, and
who, amidst their strife,
Struggles to help his helpers, and fights so
hard for his life,—
Tugging at rope and at reef, while men
weep and women swoon.
Priceless second by second, so wastes the
afternoon,
And it is sunset now ; and another boat
and the last
Down to him from the bridge through
the rapids has safely passed.

IV.

Wild through the crowd comes flying a
man that nothing can stay,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Maddening against the gate that is locked
athwart his way.

"No! we keep the bridge for them that
can help him. You,

Tell us, who are you?" "His brother!"

"God help you both! Pass through."

Wild, with wide arms of imploring, he
calls aloud to him,

Unto the face of his brother, scarce seen in
the distance dim;

But in the roar of the rapids his fluttering
words are lost

As in a wind of autumn the leaves of au-
tumn are tossed.

And from the bridge he sees his brother
sever the rope

Holding him to the raft, and rise secure
in his hope;

Sees all as in a dream the terrible page-
antry,—

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Populous shores, the woods, the sky, the
birds flying free ;
Sees, then, the form — that, spent with
effort and fasting and fear,
Flings itself feebly and fails of the boat
that is lying so near —
Caught in the long-baffled clutch of the
rapids, and rolled and hurled
Headlong on the cataract's brink and out
of the world.

William Dean Howells

NIAGARA

I.



FORMED when the oceans were
fashioned, when all the world was
a workshop;

Loud roared the furnace fires, and tall
leapt the smoke from volcanoes,
Scooped were round bowls for lakes, and
grooves for the sliding of rivers,
Whilst, with a cunning hand, the moun-
tains were linkèd together.

Then through the daw-dawn, lurid with
cloud, and rent by forked lightning,
Stricken by earthquake beneath, above
by the rattle of thunder,
Sudden the clamour was pierced by a
voice, deep-lunged and portentous —



VIEW FROM CANADA.

Poetry of Niagara

Thine, O Niagara, crying: "Now is
created completed!"

II.

Millions of cup-like blossoms, brimming
with dew and with rain-drops,
Mingle their tributes together to form
one slow-trickling brooklet;
Thousands of brooklets and rills, leaping
down from their home in the uplands,
Grow to a smooth, blue river, serene, and
flowing in silence.

Hundreds of smooth, blue rivers, flashing
afar o'er the prairies,
Darkening 'neath forests of pine, deep
drowning the reeds in the marshes,
Cleaving with noiseless sledge the rocks
red-crustcd with copper,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Circle at last to one common goal, the
Mighty Sea-Water.

Lo! to the northward outlying, wide
glimmers the stretch of the Great Lake,
White-capped and sprinkled with foam,
that tumbles its bellowing breakers
Landward on beaches of sand, and in
hiding-holes hollow with thunder,
Landward where plovers frequent, with
the wolf and the westering bison.

Four such Sea-Waters as this, a chain of
green land-bounden oceans,
Pour into one their tides, ever yearning to
greet the Atlantic,
Press to one narrow sluice, and proffering
their tribute of silver,
Cry as they come: "Receive us, Niagara,
Father of Waters!"

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Such is the Iroquois god, the symbol of
might and of plenty,
Shrine of the untutored brave, subdued
by an unfathomed longing,
Seeking in water and wind, still seeking
in star-glow and lightning,
Something to kneel to, something to pray
to, something to worship.

Here, when the world was wreathed with
the scarlet and gold of October,
Here, from far-scattered camps, came the
moccasined tribes of the redman,
Left in their tent their bows, forgot their
brawls and dissensions,
Ringed thee with peaceful fires, and over
their calumets pondered ;

Chose from their fairest virgins the fair-
est and purest among them,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Hollowed a birchen canoe, and fashioned
a seat for the virgin,
Clothed her in white, and set her adrift to
whirl to thy bosom,
Saying: "Receive this our vow, Niagara,
Father of Waters!"

III. THE PILGRIM

Pilgrim I too once came, to tender my
token of homage.
I too once stood on thy wooded banks,
my heart filled with wonder,
I too would render some gift, some tribute
of song and of harp-strings,
But 'neath the roll of thy wheels, my
shepherd's flute was o'ermastered.

Calling, thou seemest to murmur: "Come,
and I will instruct thee!"

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Willing I ran, like a palmer of old, with
his pike-staff and wallet,
Willing I lingered long, to go, but to turn
on the morrow,
Coming again and again,—yet only to
doubt thee more deeply.

Idol I found thee, unfeeling, challenging
man but to mock him,
Whispering to one that is weak of voids
that are vast and almighty,
Hinting of things heaven-high to one
not winged like an eagle,
Telling of changeless parts to a leaflet that
reddens to perish ;

Ever, as nearer I fared, the mightier, less
merciful found thee,
Till, after listening long, I faltered, forlorn
and disheartened ;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Wearied of ceaseless strife, and yearned for
some peaceful seclusion,
Where to the chousing throng both ear
and eye might be shuttered ;

Hated the turmoil of life, where sounds
that are sweetest are strangled,
And into discord clash those martial meas-
ures, that struggling,
Should the din of the dismalest fight,
with quavering echoes,
Nerve the warrior anew, and fire his soul
with devotion.

Turning towards far-off fields, I fled, till,
stopping to listen,
Only dull undertones told that still thou
wert calling and calling ;
Wept, and wished it mid-winter, that,
muffled in snows of December,



PROSPECT POINT — WINTER.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

All the world might be smothered in
silence utterly soundless;

Wished like a Druid to hie to some moun-
tain-top shorn and unsheltered,
Where, in their wildest flights, the riotous
winds might be stifled,
Finding no hollow reed through which to
pipe their bravuras,
Finding no trembling twig on which to
twang their lamentings.

Then, as I crost a meadow-land, dight
with mallow and daisies,
Heard the low bumble of bees, and the
delicate footsteps of robins
That o'er the crispy leaves of the scrub-
oak coverts went hopping,
Suddenly — who shall explain it? — faith
returned to my bosom;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Suddenly hope revived, the fog from the
fens was uplifted,
Lost was the din of life that stormed and
roared in the roadways,
Calm were the grassy fields, a lullaby
purred through the willows.
And overhead the night was illumined
with flickering beacons.

IV.

Often, in later years, allured by thy
strange fascination,
Often again have I come, with feet that
would not turn backward;
Often knelt at thy feet, and sought with
a lover's persistence,
Whether, beneath thy dolorous fugue,
one promise was whispered.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Hope there was none for me ; august was
the deep diapason,
But 't was the moan of the sea, the growl
of the forest unfeeling,
Threat of the sulphurous skies that, when
they are fevered and angry,
Volley the world with flame and curse
mankind with their laughter.

V. THE UPPER RAPIDS

Still, with the wonder of boyhood, I fol-
low the race of thy Rapids,
Sirens that dance, and allure to destruc-
tion — now lurking in shadows,
Skirting the level stillness of pools and the
treacherous shallows,
Smiling and dimple-mouthed, coquetting,
— now modest, now forward ;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Tenderly chanting, and such the thrall of
the weird incantation,
Thirst it awakes in each listener's soul, a
feverish longing,
Thoughts all-absorbent, a torment that
stings and ever increases,
Burning ambition to push bare-breast to
thy perilous bosom.

Thus, in some midnight obscure, bent
down by the storm of temptation
(So hath the wind, in the beechen wood,
confided the story),
Pine-trees, thrusting their way and tramp-
ling down one another,
Curious, lean and listen, replying in sobs
and in whispers ;

Till of the secret possessed, which brings
sure blight to the hearer



CAVE OF THE WINDS—ROCK OF AGES.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

(So hath the wind, in the beechen wood
confided the story),
Faltering, they stagger brinkward—
clutch at the roots of the grasses,
Cry—a pitiful cry of remorse—and
plunge down in the darkness.

Art thou, all-merciless then—a fiend,
ever fierce for new victims?
Was then the red-man right (as yet it
liveth in legend),
That, ere each twelvemonth circles, still to
thy shrine is allotted
Blood of one human heart, as sacrifice
due and demanded?

Butterflies have I followed, that, leaving
the red-top and clover,
Thinking the wind-harp thy voice, thy
froth the fresh whiteness of daisies,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Ventured too close, grew giddy, and catch-
ing cold drops on their pinions,
Balanced — but vainly — and, falling,
their scarlet was blotted forever.

VI. THE CATARACT

Still to thy Fall I come near, as unto
earth's grandest cathedral,
Forehead uncovered, hands down, with
feet that falter beneath me;
Hearing afar, o'er the rustling grass and
the rush of the river,
Chorus triumphant, thy trumpet voice,
and I tremble with weakness.

Tall above tower and tree looms thy
steeple builded of sunshine,
Mystical steeple, white like a cloud, up-
yearning toward Heaven,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Till into cloud-land it drifts, uprolling in
hill-tops and headlands,
Catches the glory of sunset, then pales
into rose-tint and purple.

Slowly through gothic aisles, I creep to
the steps of thine altar,
Halfway forgetting thy presence, though
still with each step I draw nearer,
Halfway forgetting thy voice, so far it
sends fancy awandering,
Till, with a sudden ascent, full-face thou
standest before me.

Who, upon tiptoes straining, shall snare
the fleet course of the comet!
Who, in bright pigments, shall match
the luminous sun-god at mid-day!
Who shall dare picture in words the tur-
bulent wrath of the tempest!

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Seeing, I can but stand still, with finger
on lip, and keep silent.

VII.

Lo! drifting toward us approaches a
curious tangle of something!

White and untillered it floats, bewitching
the sight, and appearing

Like to a birchen canoe, a virgin crouched
pallid within it,

Hastening with martyr zeal to solve the
unriddled hereafter!

Slower and smoother her flight, until on
the precipice pausing,

Just for the space of a breath the dread
of the change seems to thrill her;

Crossing herself, and seeming to shudder,
She lifts her eyes to Heaven —

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Sudden a mist upwhirls—I see not—but
know all is over.

Stoop and explore the void where this
vision of fancy hath vanished!
Torrents of green and blue drench down
the dizzy escarpment,
Fall into shattered flakes, and merge into
fury of snow-squalls;
Crisp, like glaciers, they shatter, then
smoke in the whirl of the vortex.

Stoop and look down! and read, if you
can, the terrible riddle!
Nay, the secret of death by death's eyes
alone can be fathomed;
But o'er the mystery finished is fluttered
the curtain Most Holy,
And on this curtain is set the sign of re-
demption — a rainbow.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Symbol of hope is this, or merely man's
hopeful invention?

Thou hast no answer to that, beyond
this dull undertone moaning:

“Man, of all animate things the noblest,
most meanly ignoble,

Smiling only to tempt, and spoiling what-
e'er he embraces!”

Is then thy bow we clasp'd as pledge of a
promise unfailing,

Naught but a sun-dog ferocious, that,
mouthing the mariner's noonday,

Kisses with lying lips the soft-sleeping
clouds of midsummer,

Only to taunt him, lulled by the calm,
with an ambushed tornado?

Faith in thee have I none! I lift spent
eyes, and, despairing,

Poetry of Niagara

Set my teeth in defiance. Fate, then, the
father of all things!

I but a victim moth, to be snatched by a
merciless current,

Dragged by cold eddies down, to be lost
and forever forgotten!

Why then this pilgrimage here? God
knows no willful self-seeking

Lent us this restless life; and no faint heart
or rebellion

Gives us this fear to lie down, and rest in
the slumberous dreamland! —

Answer, if answer thou hast! Answer,
Niagara! answer!

Weary with waiting, we climb to the
hill-tops nearest to Heaven,

Find only floating fogs, and air too
meagre to nourish;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Seeking the depths of the sea, we drop
our plummets and feel them,
Draw them in empty, or yellowed with
clay, that melts and tells nothing ;

Forests we thread, wide prairies unfenced,
and drenchèd morasses,
Strike, with the fervour of youth, to the
heart of the tenantless deserts ;
Turn every boulder, still hoping to find
beneath them some prophet —
Find only thistles unsunn'd, green sloth,
and passionless creatures.

Youth flitted by us, we faint, then sink in
the ruts of our fathers ;
Shift as we may with the old beliefs, and
beat on our bosoms ;
Seek less and hunger less keenly, still sor-
row for self and for others,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Striving, by travail and tears, life's deeper
meaning to strangle;

Drag from sunset to sunset, too fainting
to fear for the morrow,
Suffer, complain of our loads, but catch
at their withes as they leave us,
Letting the song-birds escape, perceiving
not till they've fluttered —
Bitterly weeping then, as we watch them
die in the distance.

Struggling, we snatch at straws: call out,
expecting no answer;
Pray, but without any faith; grow lag-
gard and laugh at our anguish;
Sin, and with wine-cup deadened, scoff at
the dread of hereafter —
And, because all seems lost, besiege Death's
doorway with gladness.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Better we had not been, for what is the
goal of such striving?

Bubbles that glitter perchance, to burst in
thin air as they glitter!

Comets that cleave the night, to leave the
night but the darker!

Smudge that bursts into flame, but only
in smoke to be smothered!

Out of the gifts of our spring, that only is
beautiful, counted

With which the day-dawn breaks bud,
and dies ere the dewdrops have left it;

Smiles there no healthfuller clime, where
forms that are fair never perish,

But, in a life-giving ether, grow fairer
with ripening seasons?

Iroquois God, I adore thee, because thou
art lasting and mighty,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Turn and gaze at thee, going, as on an all-
marvelous vision,
Dread thee, thou art so serene — but hate
thee with hatred most bitter,
Taunter of all who dabble thy foam, and
think to discover.

VIII. THE GORGE

'Neath the abyss lies the valley, a valley
of darkness — a hades,
Where the spent stream, as it strives, seeks
only an end to its anguish ;
Who shall its fastnesses fathom, or tell
what wrecks they envelop?
Here 'neath the tides of time, life's rem-
nants await resurrection.

Deep is the way, and weary the way,
while lofty above it

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Frowns upon either hand, a cliff sheer-
shouldered or beetling,
Holding in durance forever the course of
the will-broken exile,
Blighting all hope of return, should it
pant for the flowering pastures.

But from the brinks lean down a few
slender birches and cedars,
Dazed by the depth and the gloom of the
channel resounding beneath them ;
Here campanulas, too, which lurk wher-
ever is danger,
Stoop with a smile of hope, reflecting the
blue of the heavens.

Fleeter still flies the flood, up-heaving its
scum at the centre,
Dragging the tides from the shores to
leave them a hand-breadth the lower ;



WHIRLPOOL RAPIDS.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

While, like a serpent of yellow, the spume
crooks down to the Whirlpool,
Trails with a zigzagging motion down to
the hideous Whirlpool.

IX. THE WHIRLPOOL

Here is the end of all things, of all things
another beginning,
Here the long valley crooks, and the
flight of the river is broken ;
Round is the cavernous pool, and in at
one side leaps the river,
Headlong it plunges, despairing, and beats
on the bars of its prison ;

Beats, and runs wildly from wall to wall,
then strives to recover,
Beats on another still, and around the
circle is carried,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Jostled from shoulder to shoulder, till
losing its galloping motion,
Dizzily round it swirls, and is dragged to-
ward the hideous Whirlpool.

Lofty the rock-walls loom, the narrow
outlet concealing,
Loftier still stoop pines, that shut out the
pity of sunlight ;
Whilst above both a shadow, as if from
the wings of a vulture,
Sheds over all below a pall more spectral
than midnight.

Up from the seething witch-pot arises a
sulphurous vapour,
Smoke-clouds slow-winged drift hither
and hence, revealing, now hiding :
Whilst from the hollow depths, that hiss
from some under-world fervour,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Bubble, in torrents black, the refuse of
wreck and corruption.

Round sweeps the horrible maelstrom, and
into the whirl of its vortex

Circle a broken boat, an oar-blade, things
without number;

Striving, they shove one another, and
seem to hurry, impatient

To measure the shadowy will-be, and
seek from their torment a respite.

Logs that have leapt the Falls and swum
unseen 'neath the current,

Here are restored again, and weird is their
resurrection;

Here like straws they are snapt, and
grinding like millstones together,

Chafing and splintering their mates, they
wade in their deepening ruins;

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Till, without hope, on tiptoe they rise,
lips shriveled and speechless,
Seeing sure fate before them that tightens
its toils to ensnare them;
Hollow the hell-hole gapes, and raven-
ously it receives them—
All that is left is a sigh, and the echoes of
that are soon strangled.

X. CONCLUSION

This, then, can this be the end? and death
but a blotting forever?
Turning, a bird was beside me, and strik-
ing a delicate measure,
Clearly it whistled — a herald-like strain,
that challenged a hearer,
Sung —'t was a broken song — and stop-
ping, far distant, it fluttered.

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

"Seek within!" was the message, "without
is only reflection;
Sinless are nature's forms, and therefore
utterly soulless;
Sin may debase thee, make thee the ser-
vant of Fate and of Nature—
But to thy height arise, and thou art of
all things creator.

"That alone is august which is gazed
upon by the noble,
That alone is gladsome which eyes full
of gladness discover;
Night-time is but a name for the dark-
ness man nurtures within him,
Storm but a symbol of sin in a soul that
is stained and unshriven.

"Act but thine own true part, as He who
created hath purposed,

P o e t r y o f N i a g a r a

Then are the waters thine, the winds, all
forces of nature;
Thine too the seasons, their fruits, which
they redden but to surrender,
Thine too the years, and thine all time —
everlasting and fearless."

George Houghton

NIAGARA




ERE speaks the voice of God — let
man be dumb,

Nor with his vain aspiring hither come.
That voice impels the hollow-sounding
floods,
And like a presence fills the distant woods.

These groaning rocks the Almighty's fin-
ger piled ;
For ages here his painted bow has smiled,
Mocking the changes and the chance of
time —
Eternal, beautiful, serene, sublime.

Willis G. Clark

NIAGARA'S EVERLASTING
VOICE

OW sweet 't would be, when all the
air,

In moonlight swims along the river,
To couch upon the grass and hear
Niagara's everlasting voice
Far in the deep blue West away ;
That dreamy and poetic noise
We mark not in the glare of day —
Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
When o'er the brink the tide is driven,
As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from Heaven !

Joseph Rodman Drake



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